

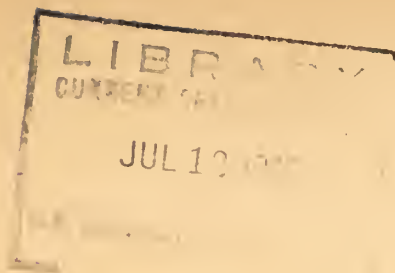
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Soil Conservation Service
Washington 25, D. C.



FIELD MEMORANDUM SCS-1130

RE: Increase in Grass-Legume
Activities through Districts

June 16, 1949

TO ALL RANKING FIELD OFFICERS:

During the years immediately ahead there are indications that many farmers are likely to make adjustments in their cropping programs in order to: (a) increase the acreage in grasses, legumes, and grass-legume mixtures, and to (b) decrease the acreage in those crops which may be in surplus supply. As it now appears, this could be the largest shift in the use of the nation's farmland acreage since the beginning of World War II. The Soil Conservation Service, as part of its assistance to soil conservation districts, must be prepared to assist cooperating farmers in districts to make the most desirable shifts in land use.

The steps to be taken by the Service in this connection were discussed at a recent meeting of the Regional Conservators in Upper Darby, Pennsylvania, and again studied in considerable detail last week in Kansas City at a meeting of agronomy, nursery, and range technicians. Details will be forwarded to you shortly through our regular Service channels.

Purpose

In summary, it will be the purpose of the Service, in this prospective swing to grass, to prepare its field personnel to give timely and genuine assistance to soil conservation districts in such a program, whether it develops immediately on a large scale or not. The tendency of our American agriculture is, and has been since the beginning of the Service's soil conservation program, toward more grass for the purpose of establishing a safer agriculture than where row crops and grain are grown out of proportion to the capability of the land. The Service has worked in this direction since the day of its birth. Surplus production would simply intensify the need for more grass on more land.

Get Ready by the Fall of 1949

By this coming fall, we want each technician in the Service to have up-to-date and readily available information, covering the cooperating farms in his work unit or district, on the following subjects:

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1. The lands in those capability classes that should be given first priority in seeding to grasses, legumes, or grass-legume mixtures; as well as other lands which would benefit by such seedings or by a lengthening of crop rotations,
2. The kinds of grasses, legumes, or grass-legume mixtures that should be seeded on the different classes of land under the prevailing local conditions,
3. The best times to do the seeding,
4. The best ways to do the seeding, and
5. The best ways to get the most economical production of seed, feed, and livestock from grassland.

State, regional, and Washington office personnel of the Service are charged with assisting soil conservation district and work unit technicians in getting this information together and putting it to use. The Service has a large responsibility to districts in this period of prospective change in American agriculture. It is to put to the best possible use the practical and scientific knowledge that we have acquired about the land, its use, and treatment, through research, experience, and surveys.

Seed Supply Needs to be Increased Now

As district cooperators begin to plan their cropping programs for the next, and the following, season, with larger acreages likely to be scheduled for grass and legumes, the scarcity of many kinds of desirable seed likely will become increasingly apparent. In anticipation of this seed scarcity, the Service will make every practical effort, beginning at once, to bring about the largest possible harvest of needed grass and legume seed in 1949 and also take such steps as will increase plantings necessary for a larger 1950 harvest of needed grass and legume seeds.

Plan of Action

There will be three main parts to Service activity in connection with producing needed grass and legume seed.

First, the Service will undertake to make quick surveys in each soil conservation district to determine where sufficient stands of desirable seed are maturing as to justify harvesting.

Second, the Service will acquaint farmers -- and others in a position to aid or participate -- of the seed-harvesting prospects in such areas, in order that proper preparations can be made with respect to equipment, labor, etc.

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Third, the Service will make a study of the government-owned lands under its jurisdiction with the view of increasing the 1949 harvest of desirable seed, and increasing the planting for 1950 seed production.

As adjustments are made in the use of lands now in crops, we should also recognize the increased opportunity for improving range and pasture lands.

Further, we should recognize:

1. That some of the idle lands and some of the lands now being used for crops are not suited to sustained production of grass and should be permanently retired to desirable species of trees, and
2. That the conservation and improvement of the range in the western states is of prime importance in protecting a major source of livestock products and is, in addition, directly related to the success of any cropland conversion effort that may be undertaken, inasmuch as the western range would probably be called on to provide much of the livestock for the original stocking of new grassland areas and would continue to be an important feeder and stocker source area.
3. That the increasing action in upstream flood control is likely to cause a large increase in the use of various grasses.

Other aspects of Service activity in connection with such prospective land use changes and increased seeding of grasses and legumes, as indicated above, will be brought to your attention during the months ahead. This is to urge that you prepare yourself for full and active participation in a development which would advance the regular soil conservation program of the Service in cooperation with soil conservation districts throughout the country.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "A. H. Bennett".

Chief.

